



TEXAS VITAL STATISTICS NEWS

Bureau of Vital Statistics, Texas Department of Health

Winter, 1998

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VOLUNTARY ADOPTION REGISTRY MOVES TO BVS

The Voluntary Adoption Registry is a system of about 40 registries in Texas that allows adoptees, biological parents, and/or siblings to locate each other if desired. The Voluntary Adoption Registry is a function operated by the staff at the Central Adoption Registry (CAR), which will be moving to the Bureau of Vital Statistics in January, 1998.

If an adoptee who was adopted or born in Texas is interested in finding his or her biological parents or siblings, they can register with the Voluntary Adoption Registry. The first step is to submit a fee of \$20.00 to the CAR, along with proof of identity and information about the adoption. The CAR will then search for the child-placing agency which handled the adoption.

If the agency has its own registry, the person must register with that agency's registry. If the adoption was handled privately, or if an agency is no longer in operation, the person will register only with the CAR. Information about other registries that an individual may try is also available from the CAR.

Once registered in the appropriate place or places (more than one registry may be used), the registry will try to find a match.

All interested parties would need to register in order to find a match. If a match is found, all those involved will be counseled, encouraged to move slowly and cautiously before meeting and educated about the reunion process and any other adoption issues specific to meeting biological relatives.

Medical reasons often prompt an individual to attempt to contact a biological child, parent or sibling. For example, a biological relative may be able to donate bone marrow for a transplant, and using the registry may decrease the time spent locating the relative.

The CAR also has possession of files from many defunct child placing agencies and can provide non-identifying information about the biological family to the adoptee. If a family updates medical information important to the adoptee, a search is performed to locate the last known address of the adoptive family. If located, the adoptive family will be notified that new medical information exists.

When a person contacts the Voluntary Adoption Registry, the CAR searches for information about the adoption in a secure

database. The database contains information taken from the Certificates of Adoption that are certified by the district clerk of the court that handled the adoption. Staff at the Bureau of Vital Statistics enter the information into the database. If the Certificates of Adoption are completed properly, the need for additional costs invoked by manual searches may be decreased.

Effective September 1, 1997, by law (Texas Family Code, § 162.018(d)), the court must inform the adoptive parents and the adoptee (if the child is over 14 years old) about the availability and the purpose of the Voluntary Adoption Registry. The agency which handles the adoption must provide this information to the biological parents. If the adoption is handled privately, there is no mandate requiring the attorney to inform the biological parents about the registry.

For additional information, you may contact the Central Adoption Registry at MC Y-943, P.O. Box 149030, Austin, TX 78714-9030, or e-mail bvsweb@stats.tdh.state.tx.us.

BIRTH CERTIFICATE FRAUD: A CONTINUAL PROBLEM

A false identity and new life style begin with a birth certificate. Once obtained, it becomes the breeder document for obtaining additional documents such as a driver's license, social security card or passport.

On any given day in this country, valid birth certificates are stolen, loaned out, or sold enabling someone to impersonate the owner of the record. With the advent of modern computer technology, forgery and counterfeiting creates high quality fraudulent documents. With enhanced immigration and welfare laws, these fraudulent documents are highly sought after.

Who are these people that seek a false identity? They can be career criminals, undocumented aliens, fugitives, child support evaders or terrorists. Using false identities, these individuals are often involved in fraud associated with insurance, organized crime, public assistance, document suppliers, alien smuggling, banking and other illegal activities.

The creation of a birth record in illegal alien trafficking is a big problem for most border states. The holder of any such certificate becomes eligible for most state

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RISKS INVOLVED WITH DELAYING CHILDBEARING

The number of women 40 years and older having children has risen dramatically over the past ten years. These women and their infants potentially have a high risk of health and medical problems during pregnancy, labor and delivery compared to younger mothers. To determine the extent of this risk, the Statistical Services Division examined the birth certificates of Texas women having their first birth during 1995.

We found that women 40 years old and older (older women) were likely to be white (non-Hispanic), to have either no education or some college, and to begin prenatal care during the first trimester.

We also found that older women were more likely than younger women to deliver by Cesarean section but were only slightly more likely to have a multiple birth. Older women were more likely to have a medical risk factor, such as diabetes or pregnancy-associated hypertension, during the pregnancy. Complications during labor and delivery, such as premature rupture of the membranes, placenta previa, or breech/

malpresentation, were also more likely to occur in older women.

Infants born to older women were more likely than infants born to younger women to be premature and to be of low birth weight. They were also more likely to have Respiratory Distress Syndrome or to require assisted ventilation. Finally, these infants were more likely to have heart malformations, malformed genitalia, and Down's Syndrome.

Although older women are at greater risk than younger women for problems during pregnancy, labor and delivery, the incidence of these problems is low. However, because the population of older first-time pregnant women is growing, the incidence of problems will grow as well.

For additional information, or to receive the full-length report of this study, please contact the Statistical Services Division at (512) 458-7509 or by e-mail at bvsweb@stats.tdh.state.tx.us

SUITS AFFECTING THE FAMILY RELATIONSHIP

To simplify District Clerk reporting requirements, the Bureau of Vital Statistics (BVS) consolidated three separate reports into one. Our VS-165, revised 9/96, combines the information previously contained in the BVS forms *Declaration of Paternity* and *Report of Divorce or Annulment of Marriage*, and the Protective and Regulatory Services form *Information on Child in Suit Affecting the Parent-Child Relationship* (SAPCR). We also eliminated the requirement that clerks forward a copy of each decree in these cases.

The SAPCR form should only be submitted when a final order is entered. It should not be used to report temporary or emergency orders, or to report legal name changes unless the name change is also accompanied by another type of order (for example, divorce, termination of parental rights, etc.).

With the information received on these forms, BVS can respond to inquiries regarding the court of exclusive, continuing jurisdiction for a child. We receive most inquiries from the Office of the Attorney General and from the Texas Department

of Protective & Regulatory Services. There is currently no fee for inquiries into this database.

Another significant feature of the SAPCR form is the reporting of adjudicated paternities. If the paternity establishment has been properly reported to BVS on the SAPCR form, we can process a parent's request for a new birth certificate without additional documentation from the court. The parents must simply complete the appropriate amendment application and pay the \$25.00 filing fee. They must pay an additional \$11.00 if they request a certified copy of the new record.

The Family Code requires the petitioner to complete the SAPCR form; however, it is very important that the district clerk's office review these forms for accuracy and completeness before certifying and forwarding them to BVS. We are unable to process incomplete forms, and we will return them to the district clerk's office for correction.

If you have any questions about completing this form, you may contact Sandra Lackey at (512) 458-7368 or e-mail at slackey@bvs.tdh.state.tx.us

Dear State Registrar

Q. Who can sign as certifier on a death certificate?

A Medical Examiner, other physician, or a Justice of the Peace acting as Coroner can sign as certifier on a death certificate. Investigators who are not physicians may assist in an inquest but may not sign the certificate. If the Justice of the Peace who serves the precinct in which the body was found is not available, then the nearest available Justice of the Peace, municipal court judge, county judge, or judge of the county court at law of the county in which the death occurred or in which the body was found may sign as certifier.

If you have a question, please e-mail us at bvsweb@stats.tdh.state.tx.us, or fax it to (512) 458-7233 or mail to Bureau of Vital Statistics, Texas Department of Health, 1100 W. 49th St., Austin, TX 78756-3191. Attn: BVS newsletter.

TEXAS DEATHS, 1996

A total of 139,678 Texas residents died in 1996. The leading cause of death, heart disease, accounted for 30.3 percent of those deaths, while the second most common cause of death, malignant neoplasms (cancer), accounted for 22.9 percent.

Cerebrovascular diseases, accidents, and chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases, made up the third, fourth, and fifth leading causes, respectively. These five leading causes of death represented 70 percent of all 1996 deaths.

The number of lives claimed by human immunodeficiency virus infection (HIV) decreased for the first time in 1996 by more than 25 percent. There were 2,061 deaths due to HIV in 1996 (10.9 per 100,000 population) compared to 2,764 deaths in 1995 (14.8 per 100,000 population).

Accidents continued to be the leading cause of death among male Texans under age 45, and female Texans under age 35. Although homicide was no longer one of the ten leading causes of deaths among all Texas residents, it was the seventh and ninth leading cause among Hispanics and blacks, respectively.

There were 2,080 Texas resident infant deaths for an infant mortality rate of 6.3 infant deaths per 1,000 live births. The number and rate of infant deaths were all-time lows for the state of Texas. Congenital anomalies were responsible for one fourth of all infant deaths, followed by Sudden

See 1996 Deaths, page 4

CM 3.0 FOR WINDOWS & THE 21ST CENTURY

Certificate Manager 3.0 (CM 3.0), the newest Windows-based birth certificate registration system, is quickly replacing Certificate Manager 2.5. Since introduction 8 years ago, Certificate Manager contains more advantages than ever in preparing birth certificates.

CM 3.0 is "year 2000 compatible." This means it recognizes all four digits of the year (1997), not just the last two digits (97), assuming a preceding "19." This problem, common to many older computer applications, leads to interpreting the year 2000, or 00, as 1900.

The Bureau of Vital Statistics is requiring all hospitals to upgrade to CM 3.0 by the end of 1998.

CM 3.0, introduced in January 1997, is proving even more popular than previous versions. Our feedback indicates it is easier to use and provides hospitals with more network, reporting and exporting options. It requires a computer using a Windows operating system. Minimum hardware

requirements include 386 IBM compatible PC, VGA monitor, 1.44 MB high density floppy drive, Hayes compatible 14.4 modem and Windows 3.1 compatible printer with cut-sheet capability.

CM 3.0 also provides for the use of a short form birth certificate for hospitals that demonstrate regular and timely transmissions. This is a special form with the top legal portion of the birth certificate and a detachable bottom portion with information on immunization, social security numbers, how to get a birth certificate and the Texas Tomorrow Fund.

The medical information at the bottom of the long birth certificate form is still collected by the hospital but is only transmitted electronically to the Bureau of Vital Statistics.

For more information, for an initial installation, or to request your upgrade to CM 3.0, call your Region's Field Representative. See page 4 for the Field Representative listing.

DOCUMENT FRAUD

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and federal programs such as public assistance and public housing.

Fraud is committed by the novice offender who alters a child's birth certificate for early school enrollment. There is also the offender that simply alters their birth certificate to enhance their age to get a driver's license, speed up or delay retirement, or just make themselves younger or older.

Each one of us is a potential victim of document fraud. We must always be cautious and protect our personal vital documents. A credit card, driver's license, social security card or a telephone calling card can help someone create a false identity and cause some serious financial headaches.

Report any fraudulent activity associated with birth and death certificates to Ed Mata at **(512) 458-7415** or fax information to him at **(512) 458-7711**.

QUALIFIED APPLICANTS ARE ELIGIBLE TO RECEIVE VITAL RECORDS

In order for an individual to obtain a certified copy of a birth or death record, the person must be a qualified applicant. Chapter 25 of the Texas Administrative Code §181.11 defines a qualified applicant as: the registrant (person listed on the birth record as the child), an immediate family member either by blood or marriage, the registrant's guardian, or the registrant's legal agent or representative.

An immediate family member may be the parent, grandparent, sibling, child, or grandchild of the registrant.

Local, state and federal law enforcement, governmental agencies, or other persons may be qualified applicants if they are able to demonstrate a direct and tangible interest in the birth or death record.

If an applicant is requesting the record on behalf of the registrant or an immediate family member, the applicant should submit, with the application for a certified copy, a notarized authorization document which has been prepared and signed by the registrant or immediate family member. The form must state who is giving authorization, their relationship to the registrant, the name on the record, and the date and place of the event (see sample form at right).

A legal representative may be an attorney, funeral director, or any other person designated by a court order. The state registrar, local registrar, or county clerk may request a document to prove that the applicant is acting on behalf of the registrant or the registrant's immediate family, or prove that the applicant requires the information in order to implement a statutory provision or protect a personal legal property right.

BUREAU OF VITAL STATISTICS TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH	
STATE OF _____	
COUNTY OF _____	
I request that the Bureau of Vital Statistics in Austin, Texas allow _____ to obtain a certified copy of the birth/death certificate on my behalf.	
My relationship to the person on the certificate is: _____	
The information on the certificate:	
Name: _____	
Date of Event: _____	
Place of Event: _____	
Signature: _____	
Subscribed and sworn before me on this the _____ day of _____, 19, _____	
SEAL	
_____ SIGNATURE OF NOTARY PUBLIC	
VS 140 3/96	

We would love to hear from you! Fax us at (512) 458-7233, e-mail us at bvsweb@stats.tdh.state.tx.us or write us at Bureau of Vital Statistics, Texas Department of Health, 1100 W. 49th St., Austin, TX 78756.

Please list any topics you would like to see in this newsletter: _____

Please list any questions you have for Dear State Registrar: _____

Any other comments or suggestions: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

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1996 DEATHS

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Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS; 11.2 percent), disorders relating to short gestation and low birth weight (10.5 percent), respiratory distress syndrome (5.2 percent).

The life expectancy of a Texan born in 1996 was 76.1 years, with females expected to live 79.4 years and males expected to live 72.9 years.

For additional information, contact the Statistical Services Division at **(512) 458-7509** or by e-mail at bvsweb@stats.tdh.state.tx.us.

Available Reports

Texas Vital Statistics 1996
Texas Child Fatality Review Teams Annual Report 1995
1995 Mortality Report for Nursing Facilities and Related Institutions
Perinatal Mortality in Texas, 1989-1994
The impact of alcohol use on mortality: new estimates from the revised Texas death certificate
Delayed childbearing: increased maternal age at first birth and its association with labor and delivery outcomes.

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